



Mrs. Villa beside her favorite picture of her husband.

Mrs. Villa's Romance

Told for the First Time, and by Herself

How the Poor Little Mexican

Shopkeeper's Daughter Danced with the Unknown Bandit, Who Turned Out to Be the Powerful Leader, and Now Has a Chance to Become the "First Lady of Mexico"—Maybe

HERE for the first time Mrs. Francisco Villa tells the romantic story of her first meeting and marriage to the ex-bandit, now commander of apparently the strongest armed force in Mexico, and therefore, the probable future president of that country. It was obtained for this newspaper during the writer's recent visit to General Villa's mansion, on the outskirts of Chihuahua.

Mexico is as full of surprises as the people's candidate is full of promises, or as a Broadway musical comedy is full of pretty girls. Not one of the least of these surprises was to be ushered into a room that looked as if it might have been lifted from a French

chateau and set down in war-torn Mexico. It was all gold and palest blue satin, with long French mirrors, carpet of cream velvet, satin damask hangings in harmonious tones, graceful baskets of artificial flowers on gold pedestals, their handles tied with broad, blue ribbon bows, were conspicuous in the room.

But more conspicuous than the flowers, the joy and pride of every Mexican home of consequence, was a full length picture of the master of the house, the master of its mistress's heart, General Francisco Villa.

A woman of medium height and build, with quantities of blue-black hair bound around her head, and eyes the blue-gray of the Mexican desert after sundown, entered the room.

"Senora Francisco Villa," announced the family friend, after she had received and given the "embracio," the intimate greeting of the country.

She was gowned in black, a sort of silk mull, with trimmings of black Spanish lace. The gown was as unpretentious as the woman who wore it, and was an effective background for the jewels of which Senora Villa is palpably proud. Everything she wears by way of jewelry has been a gift from her husband. She wore a flexible gold snake with emerald eyes and a diamond tongue twined around her neck, a gold locket twice the size of a silver dollar, encrusted with diamonds and containing her favorite likeness of the General, suspended by a slender gold chain, a diamond and platinum wrist watch, and numerous rings of diamonds, rubies and emeralds, most of them in heavy claw settings.

There was a commotion in the inner hall. Senora Villa was all attention. Through the open doorway, in leaps and bounds, came the thinnest soldier you ever saw. He could not have been more than two feet at the most. The full dress uniform of a general encased his erect little body, and from beneath the peak of his gold-braided hat a pair of the snappiest and blackest of eyes were dancing with mischief.

"Mama," he shouted at the top of his voice, "me quiero retratar."

Which was nothing more nor less than a demand to be let into the picture.

"Not so loud, my little general," warned the senora. "Remember these are our guests."

Whereupon "mi general" touched his hand to the peak of his cap and stood looking up inquiringly into the senora's face for further orders.

Elias was a present baby. He was presented to the General and Senora Villa the same as silver and jewels and automobiles are presented to them. Rumor has it that Elias was an orphan, and that the donor was a man high up in the Villa Cabinet. One thing is certain. Elias has captured the love and affection of the Villas as his war-loving foster-father has captured cities and soldiers. When the General is home little Elias is his inseparable companion.

To her friends and intimates Senora Villa is known as Luz, which is Spanish for "light." The General is very fond of the name, and invariably uses the Spanish term of affection, "mía," before it.

Stories of the various wives accumulated by General Villa during his reign in Mexican cities are rolled as the tenderest morsels on the tongue of gossip. To hear his enemies tell about it, King Solomon was not more uxorious.

Big men of all times have been more or less given to these deviations. Regardless of other attachments, if there be such, the fact remains that Senora Luz Carroll Villa is his first and lawful wife by the rites of both Church and State. It is Luz only he acknowledges socially and officially. To her he entrusts his personal properties and interests, and to her only. That she is well worthy of the trust time and tide have well proven.



Wives of Soldiers of Villa's Army Accompanying Their Husbands to Camp.

The Little General," the adopted son of General and Mrs. Villa.

"How My General Made Me His Wife"

By Mrs. Francisco Villa

I WAS a slip of a girl living with my mother in the little village of San Andreas, which is in the mountains of Chihuahua. My mother kept a store for food, a very small store, and I helped her serve the people who came to buy. We lived in constant fear because of a band of men who secreted themselves in the mountains and descended into neighboring towns and villages, where they obtained money and provisions at the point of their guns.

Their leader was called Villa!

The country rang with stories of his boldness and daring. I used to shiver every time I heard the name and pray he would never descend upon San Andreas!

One day the news went forth that Villa and his band had been seen not many miles away. We were terror-stricken. That evening a commander of soldiers came into our store and bought everything there was in it. My mother explained how she was glad to get rid of her stock before the bandits came to town and robbed her. The commander, a stranger to us, laughed at our fears. He announced that he and his troops expected to give a dance in the village that night. Turning to me, he asked if he might have the honor of escorting me to the dance.

Now, I was very fond of dancing, and was considered something of an artist in this line among the young people of San Andreas. Consequently I was much pleased at the invitation, and flattered, too, to be the guest of a real commander. I donned my very best gown, fused over my hair until mother lost all patience with me, and finally left for the ball in a flutter of excitement and anticipation.

My partner was the gayest of the gay. He never missed a single dance, and I was happy to note that from the first he paid marked attention to me. I thought him the handsomest and the jolliest man I had ever met. As we were whirling around in the last dance of the evening, he began teasing me about Villa and his bandits.

"What would you do if that bandit Villa came right into this very room now?" he asked.

"I should die of fright!" I replied.

"If you will promise not to die, I will tell you a secret," he whispered in my ear. "I am Villa!"

At first I thought he was joking, but one look in his eyes convinced me he was serious enough. I did not die as I had threatened, but I confess for a moment it seemed as if my knees would give way. It must have been love at first sight for both of us, for from that night we were sweethearts.

We were married and my quiet life was carried away in the whirlpool of his busy and important one. There was a time when my general did not dare take

the chance of eating food prepared by strange hands. He did not fear his friends and associates, but he realized any one of the servants in the kitchens might be an enemy in disguise. I prepared all his meals for him. The food was never out of my sight until it was served.

When General Villa is victorious in all Mexico it is not my desire to go to Mexico City and enjoy all the pomp.

No, no, no! I do not desire to be in public. I want only the private life. My wish is to live here in Chihuahua, in the beautiful villa my general is building for me. If all goes well and peace is restored, it is our intention to take a trip around the world. Neither my general nor myself have ever travelled. We will both need the rest. It has been our dream for a long time.

I have been asked if I think women should vote. My general once put the suffrage question to a very practical test. Several men who had proven false to their cause and to their country had been put into prison and were sentenced to be shot. The question of votes for women was being discussed in the presence of General Villa. One of the men declared women should not be given the vote because they allowed their hearts to run away with their heads.

"I think you are wrong about that, gentlemen," asserted General Villa. "However, I will put it to the test. We will find out what Senora Villa would do with our guilty prisoners."

The General called me and explained the crime with which the men were charged. I knew nothing of the discussion in progress.

"Are the men traitors?" I asked.

"They are," replied the General.

"Then have them shot," I said.

This made a profound impression on the denouncers of suffrage. They thought a woman would be too soft-hearted to mete out punishment, but no punishment is too severe for a man who turns traitor to his commander and his country. Should women vote? Yes, those who have sense enough to vote intelligently.

My general is fighting for the liberty of Mexico—and for the liberty of the poor of Mexico, and these alas, are almost all of Mexico. What has been called peace in Mexico before my general began to fight was not a peace for the poor. No, it was worse than any war. Particularly was it terrible for us women. My father was always afraid that I would be abducted any time and become a slave in one of the cities or in the hacienda of a rich man. The rurales, what you would call the official police, were always ready to do this—and they were paid well for it. But now there are no more rurales, and the women are safe.